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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAKU 000021

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KHUM](#) [AJ](#)

SUBJECT: NAKHCHIVAN UPDATE: MORE HR VIOLATIONS AND RETURN  
OF OPPOSITION

Classified By: Political-Economic Counselor Rob Garverick, Reasons 1.4  
(b and d).

¶1. (C) Summary: The authorities of the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic continue to pressure ordinary citizens attempting to protect their rights. On January 4 an elderly blind man was imprisoned, and possibly put into a mental institution, for complaining about the police beating his son. Separately, a formerly prominent opposition figure in Nakhchivan has returned to Azerbaijan, and plans to organize the opposition campaign for the 2010 parliamentary elections. His activities in the province will be a severe test of the local authorities' willingness to allow any dissent at all. End Summary.

Elderly Blind Man Imprisoned for Complaining  
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¶2. (SBU) On 24 December 2008 7 young people were arrested in Nakhchivan for vandalizing the New Year's tree in the center of the city. According to the local human rights defenders, the young people were beaten in detention and then released. The parents of the 7 complained to the police department, and on January 4 they were also arrested and beaten. Three of the families agreed to renounce their complaints and were released. Ismayil Huseynov, age 72 and blind, and his wife Khanimzar Huseynova, refused to take back their complaint. The wife was put under pressure to testify that her husband is insane, but she was eventually released. Huseynov, however, remains imprisoned and has probably been transferred to a mental institution, although the authorities refuse to confirm this.

¶3. (C) Opposition newspapers in Baku are now reporting that the wife and son are also missing, and may be in hiding somewhere in Nakhchivan. Unconfirmed rumors state that the border guards have been told not to let the family leave the enclave. The Embassy is following up with calls to the leader of the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic and the Presidential Apparat in Baku to express concern about the reports.

Possible Return of Opposition Leader  
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¶4. (C) Separately, on January 4 PolOff met with Asaf Guliyev, who was formerly the chairman of the oppositon Popular Front Party in Nakhchivan. (Note: th Popular Front ruled Azerbaijan in the early 1990, during the Nagorno-Karabakh war with Armenia. Heydar Aliyev, who hails from Nakhchivan, ousted Popular Front leader Abulfaz Elchibey as President of Azerbaijan in 1993. End Note) Guliyev explained that he was

active in resistance to the Soviet Union from the 1970s, and was arrested for his political beliefs under Heydar Aliyev. He was freed from jail along with hundreds of other alleged political prisoners after Azerbaijan joined the Council of Europe in 2001. He organized a united opposition movement in Nakhchivan ahead of the 2005 parliamentary elections called the "Democracy Development Center." After the elections, however, he left the country for Turkey, worried about being imprisoned again.

15. (C) Guliyev says he has returned to Azerbaijan in order to organize the opposition in Nakhchivan for the 2010 parliamentary elections. He claims to have gathered the support of a number of opposition parties in Baku, and as a first step will set up a communications center so that opposition members can connect with the outside world via the Internet. He will also use his center to gather information about what is happening in Nakhchivan and try to get this news into newspapers in Baku, as there is currently little reporting done in Nakhchivan.

Comment

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16. (C) Huseynov's imprisonment is indicative of the increasing crackdown in Nakhchivan on the ability of ordinary citizens to protect their rights. This pressure increased in advance of October's presidential election and does not seem to be decreasing. The possible return of an opposition figure with some public support will be a test of whether there is any room for dissent at all in the province. The

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Embassy will continue to monitor this situation closely.  
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